

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-9 remain in the application. Reconsideration of this application, in view of the following remarks, is respectfully requested.

The drawings appear to have been objected to. See page 2 of the Office Action. The application contains six drawing figures. It was indicated that the guide plate slots have not been depicted indicated with reference(s) numerals. According to the specification, the guide plate slots have the reference numerals 50 and 52. See the amended paragraphs of page 8 of the specification and FIGS. 5 and 6 of the drawings. The amended paragraphs of page 8, amended FIG. 5, and new FIG. 6 were submitted to the United States Patent and Trademark Office on August 7, 2006 in the Amendment and Response after Final Rejection, and resubmitted in the Request for Continued Examination filed 16 October 2006. Copies of the amended paragraphs of page 8, amended FIG. 5, and new FIG. 6 are attached hereto for ease of reference. Accordingly, this objection should be withdrawn. The most current version of FIG. 1 was filed on November 15, 2004; the most current version of FIG. 2 was filed on November 15, 2004; the most current version of FIG. 3 was filed on April 10, 2006; the most current version of FIG. 4 was filed on August 7, 2006 in the Amendment and Response after Final Rejection, and resubmitted in the Request for Continued Examination filed 16 October 2006. Upon allowance of the application, new formal drawings will be submitted, as required, to improve the quality of the drawings and to correct any minor errors still remaining in the drawings. Of course, no new matter will be added.

Claims 1-9 were rejected under 35 U. S. C. §112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the enablement requirement. This rejection is respectfully traversed for the following reasons.

It was indicated that the specification fails to teach one skilled in the art how an object transfers from the first segment to the second. More specifically, it was stated that the amendment submitted on April 10, 2006 contained the information required by the Examiner, but that information was deemed to be new matter. The following remarks will address the rejection based on 35 U. S. C. §112, first paragraph.

Referring to FIGS. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, a dual lane track 14 (FIG. 1) comprises a run 14a (FIG. 5) and a run 14b (FIG. 5). See page 7, lines 6-8 of the specification. The run 14a comprises an inside lane 16 (FIG. 1) and an outside lane 18 (FIG. 1). For the sake of simplification, the following discussion will refer only to the outside lane 18. The outside lane 18 comprises a chain 26 (FIG. 4) made up of two segments, a chain segment 26a (FIGS. 5 and 6) and a chain segment 26b (FIGS. 5 and 6). See page 8, lines 1-3 of the specification. The chain 26 loops around a drive sprocket 40 (FIG. 3) and an idler sprocket 46 (FIG. 3). See page 7, lines 12-21 of the specification.

From the top view of the conveyor track drive, as shown in FIGS. 5 and 6, the chain segment 26a is visible from the upstream end 24a (FIG. 6) of the housing 24 (FIG. 6) until it disappears from view when it descends below the drive plane P (FIGS. 3 and 4) formed by the upper surfaces of plates 28 of each chain segment 26a and 26b. See page 7, lines 8-14 of the specification. See FIG. 2 for the plates 28. The chain segment 26b is not visible from the upstream end 24a of the housing 24 until it appears when it emerges from the drive plane P. In Exhibit IAR, which is a marked-up copy of FIG. 5, the visible portion of the chain segment 26a is shown in pink, the portion of the chain segment 26a not visible from the top is shown in green. In Exhibit IAR, the visible portion of the chain segment 26b is shown in orange, the portion of the chain segment 26b not visible from the top is shown in blue. In Exhibit IIAR, which is a marked-up copy of FIG. 6, the visible portion of the chain segment 26a is shown in pink, the visible portion of the chain segment 26b is shown in orange, and the portion of the chain segment 26b not visible from the top is shown in blue.

It should be noted that FIGS. 5 and 6 clearly indicate that the chain segment 26a is offset from the chain segment 26b, until the chain segment 26b reaches the downstream end 24b of the housing 24. FIGS. 5 and 6 also clearly indicate that the chain segment 26b has two turns, "T1" and "T2", after that chain segment 26b becomes visible above the drive plane P. See Exhibit IAR and Exhibit IIAR. FIGS. 5 and 6 also show that a carrier guide plate 48 comprises a slot 50 formed through the guide plate 48. The slot 50 is aligned with the outside lane 18. The slot 50 guides a specimen carrier 20

on the top of the plates 28 of the chain segment 26a and the chain segment 26b of the chain 26. See page 8, lines 4-10 of the specification.

The operation of the chain 26, in conjunction with the transfer of the specimen carrier 20 from the chain segment 26a to the chain segment 26, will now be described. Referring now to Exhibit IIAR, the chain segment 26a moves in the direction of the arrow "A1". When the chain segment 26a reaches the point "P1", a given plate 28 of the chain segment 26a begins to move under the guide plate 48 and continues to the drive sprocket 40 (not shown in Exhibit IIAR). Although FIG. 6 fails to show dashed lines under the guide plate 48 to indicate that the chain segment 26a is moving toward the drive sprocket 40, FIG. 5 does show dashed lines under the guide plate 48 to indicate that the chain segment 26a is moving toward the drive sprocket 40. By the time that the given plate 28 of the chain segment 26a reaches the point "P2", that given plate 28 is no longer visible in Exhibit IIAR. See page 8, lines 4-10 of the specification.

Meanwhile, the chain segment 26b moves in the direction of the arrow "A2". At approximately the same time that the given plate 28 of the chain segment 26a begins to move under the guide plate 48, a given plate 28 of the chain segment 26b, after leaving the idler sprocket 46, begins to emerge from the guide plate 48 at the point "P3". By the time that the given plate 28 of the chain segment 26b reaches the point "P4", that given plate 28 is completely visible in Exhibit IIAR. FIG. 6 shows dashed lines under the guide plate 48 to indicate that the chain segment 26b is moving from the idler sprocket 46 to the top of the guide plate 48. In addition, FIG. 5 shows dashed lines under the guide plate 48 to indicate that the chain segment 26b is moving from the idler sprocket 46 to the top of the guide plate 48. See page 8, lines 1-3 of the specification.

The straight line P1-P2 between the points "P1" and "P2" is parallel to the straight line P3-P4 between the points "P3" and "P4". In the region bounded by straight line P1-P2 and approximately one-half of the straight line P3-P4, the specimen carrier 20 is guided by the slot 50 in the guide plate 48 through the triangular-shaped portion of the chain segment 26a bounded by the straight line P1-P2 and the straight line P2-P3 until the specimen carrier 20 is transferred over to the triangular-shaped portion of the chain segment

26b bounded by the straight line P2-P3 and the straight line P3-P4. The slot 50 in the guide plate 48 also maintains the specimen carrier 20 on the triangular-shaped portion of the chain segment 26b bounded by the straight line P2-P3 and the straight line P3-P4 until the specimen carrier 20 begins to approach the downstream end 24b of the housing 24. See page 8, lines 10-14 and page 8, lines 15-17 of the specification.

The only mechanism required to transfer the specimen carrier from the chain segment 26a to the chain segment 26b are the chain segments 26a and 26b and the sides of the slot 50 of the guide plate 48 represented by the straight lines P1-P2 and P3-P4. No complicated mechanism is needed to switch the specimen carrier 20 from chain segment 26a to the chain segment 26b. No linkage of chain segment 26a to chain segment 26 is required. Exhibit IIIAR shows a representation of a time-lapse diagram depicting the transfer of a specimen carrier 20 (shown in pink) from the chain segment 26a to the chain segment 26b by the mechanism previously described. In the Exhibit IIAR, passage of time is denoted by the symbols t_1 , t_2 , t_3 , t_4 , t_5 , and t_6 , wherein t_1 is earlier than t_2 , t_2 is earlier than t_3 , t_3 is earlier than t_4 , t_4 is earlier than t_5 , and t_5 is earlier than t_6 .

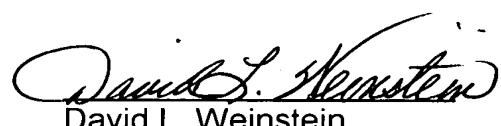
In view of the foregoing, it is submitted that the subject matter of the claims is described in the specification, in combination with the drawings, in such a way as to enable one skilled in the art to which the subject matter pertains to make and/or use the invention. In other words, the specification, in combination with the drawings, teaches one skilled in the art precisely how a specimen carrier 20 transfers from the first chain segment 26a to the second chain segment 26b.

Accordingly, it is submitted that claims 1-9, as amended, are in condition for allowance, and official Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

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herein have increased the performance and capabilities of the drive by altering the pathway of the chain 26 downward and around the drive sprocket 40 to thereby wrap around a portion of the sprocket 40. Chain 26 then proceeds under the sprocket 40 and back to the housing upstream end 24a (also shown in Figure 3), where it is wrapped upwardly around an idler sprocket 46 and then proceeds in a downstream direction in the drive plane P (see Figure 4), immediately adjacent the first segment 26a of chain 26 (as shown in Figure 5).

On page 8, please replace the second full paragraph with the following:

(full text with markings)

Referring now to Figure 6, a carrier guide plate 48 is mounted on the upper end of housing 24 to guide specimen carriers 20 as they travel from the upstream end 24a to the downstream end 24b of the housing 24 on the drive plane P (shown only in Figure 4). Guide plate 48 has two slots 50 and 52 formed therethrough, parallel to one another and extending from end to end. Slot 50 is aligned with the outside lane 18 of track 14 where the track connects with the upstream end 24a of housing 24, and continues to guide a specimen carrier 20 on the top of plates 28 of segment 26a of conveyor chain 26. About midway along segment 26a, slot 50 angles transversely and extends over segment 26b of chain 26. ~~The sidewalls 50a and 50b of slot 50 thereby shift a specimen carrier 20 carried on segment 26a to the adjacent segment 26b of conveyor chain 26.~~ Slot 50 and segment 26b of chain 26 shift transversely back to the

original line of travel of segment 26a immediately prior to exiting module 10 at the downstream end 24b of housing 24, at a location in slot 50 identified as 50e. Thus, the track 14 is aligned at the opposing ends of module 10.

(full text without markings)

Referring now to Figure 6, a carrier guide plate 48 is mounted on the upper end of housing 24 to guide specimen carriers 20 as they travel from the upstream end 24a to the downstream end 24b of the housing 24 on the drive plane P (shown only in Figure 4). Guide plate 48 has two slots 50 and 52 formed therethrough, parallel to one another and extending from end to end. Slot 50 is aligned with the outside lane 18 of track 14 where the track connects with the upstream end 24a of housing 24, and continues to guide a specimen carrier 20 on the top of plates 28 of segment 26a of conveyor chain 26. About midway along segment 26a, slot 50 angles transversely and extends over segment 26b of chain 26. Slot 50 and segment 26b of chain 26 shift transversely back to the original line of travel of segment 26a immediately prior to exiting module 10 at the downstream end 24b of housing 24. Thus, the track 14 is aligned at the opposing ends of module 10.

On page 8, please replace the last paragraph with the following:

(full text with markings)

Because the plates 28 of chain 26 reside within the same drive plane P (shown only in Figure 4), specimen carriers 20 will easily slide transversely from chain segment 26a to segment 26b between slot sidewalls 50a and 50b, without

interruption of transport. While not described in detail herein, the inside lane 16 operates in the same fashion, with a first segment 26a of chain 26 wrapping around a drive sprocket 53 (~~as shown by arrows 27~~), thence around an idler sprocket 54, and back into the same drive plane P adjacent the first chain segment 26a to form a second chain segment 26b which exits the drive module in alignment with the entry of the inside lane 16.

(full text without markings)

Because the plates 28 of chain 26 reside within the same drive plane P (shown only in Figure 4), specimen carriers 20 will easily slide transversely from chain segment 26a to segment 26b, without interruption of transport. While not described in detail herein, the inside lane 16 operates in the same fashion, with a first segment 26a of chain 26 wrapping around a drive sprocket 53, thence around an idler sprocket 54, and back into the same drive plane P adjacent the first chain segment 26a to form a second chain segment 26b which exits the drive module in alignment with the entry of the inside lane 16.